

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) An electrical connector, comprising:

a housing having a mating face that is configured to be mounted onto an electrical connector interface; ~~and~~

a latch assembly provided on a side wall of said housing, said latch assembly being oriented to extend along said side wall, said latch assembly having a latch element formed on an end thereof proximate said mating face, said latch assembly including a pivot post at an intermediate point along a length of said latch assembly, said pivot post pivotally joining said latch assembly to said side wall; and

a shroud extending outward from said side wall, said shroud having a flange spaced apart from said side wall to define a latch operating gap therebetween, said latch assembly including a beam extending along said latch operating gap, said beam pivoting laterally within said latch operating gap.

2. (original) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly includes upper and lower beams extending along said side wall and includes upper and lower pivot posts integrally joining said upper and lower beams, respectively, to said side wall.

3. (original) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly includes at least one beam projecting forward from said pivot post toward said mating face and a grip portion projecting rearward from said pivot post.

4. (original) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly pivots about a rotational axis at said pivot post, said rotational axis extending transversely through said latch assembly at an intermediate point along said length of said latch assembly.

5. (original) The electrical connector of claim 1, further comprising a shroud provided along at least a portion of said side wall, said shroud extending along at least a portion of said latch assembly in an overlapping relation.

6. (canceled)

7. (original) The electrical connector of claim 1, further comprising a shroud provided on said housing, said shroud overlapping at least a portion of said latch assembly located between said pivot post and said mating face.

8. (original) The electrical connector of claim 1, further comprising upper and lower shrouds provided on said housing above and below said latch assembly, at least one of said upper and lower shrouds overlapping a portion of said latch assembly, said portion of said latch assembly abutting against said at least one of said upper and lower shrouds to limit a range of pivotal motion of said latch assembly.

9. (original) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly includes a beam that pivots inward and outward toward and away from said side wall, said connector further comprising a shroud extending beyond and partially covering said beam.

10. (original) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly includes a grip portion that is normally biased outward away from said side wall by said pivot post, said grip portion being pivotal inward toward said side wall to release said latch element.

11. (original) An electrical connector, comprising:

a housing having a mating face that is configured to join an electrical connector interface;

a shroud provided on a side wall of said housing, said shroud having an outer flange spaced from said side wall to define a gap therebetween; and

a latch assembly pivotally provided on said side wall, said latch assembly being oriented to extend along said side wall, said latch assembly having a latch element formed on an end thereof proximate said mating face, at least a forward portion of said latch assembly being located within said gap and being pivotal between said shroud and said side wall.

12. (original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein a length of said latch assembly extends along a length of said side wall, said latch assembly including a pivot post joined to said side wall, said forward portion of said latch assembly rotating laterally within said gap about said pivot post.

13. (original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said latch assembly includes upper and lower beams extending along said side wall and includes upper and lower pivot posts integrally joining said upper and lower beams, respectively, to said side wall, one of said upper and lower beams extending along, and pivotally rotating transversely within, said gap.

14. (original) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly includes a pivot post joining said latch assembly to said side wall, said latch assembly further comprising at least one beam projecting forward from said pivot post toward said mating face and a grip portion projecting rearward from said pivot post.

15. (original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said latch assembly pivots about a rotational axis extending transversely through said latch assembly at an intermediate point along said length of said latch assembly, said forward portion laterally moving within said gap, said gap being oriented perpendicular to said rotational axis.

16. (original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said shroud has a flange spaced apart from said side wall to define said gap as a latch operating gap, said latch assembly including a beam extending along said latch operating gap, said beam pivoting laterally within said latch operating gap.

17. (original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said shroud does not overlap a rear portion of said latch assembly, said rear portion having a grip surface that is pressed toward said side wall to release said latch element.

18. (original) The electrical connector of claim 11, further comprising upper and lower shrouds provided on said housing above and below said latch assembly, at least one of said upper and lower shrouds overlapping said forward portion of said latch assembly, said forward portion of said latch assembly abutting against said at least one of said upper and lower shrouds to limit a range of pivotal motion of said latch assembly.

19. (original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said latch assembly includes a beam that pivots inward and outward toward and away from said side wall, said shroud extending beyond and partially covering said beam.

20. (original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said latch assembly includes a grip portion that is normally biased outward away from said side wall by a pivot post joining said latch assembly to said side wall, said grip portion being pivotal inward toward said side wall to release said latch element.

21. (new) An electrical connector, comprising:

a housing having a mating face that is configured to be mounted onto an electrical connector interface, said housing including opposed channels at lower side edges proximate said mating face and an open bottom therebetween; and

a latch assembly provided on a side wall of said housing, said latch assembly being oriented to extend along said side wall, said latch assembly having a latch element formed on an end thereof proximate said mating face, said latch assembly including a pivot post at an intermediate point along a length of said latch assembly, said pivot post pivotally joining said latch assembly to said side wall.